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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [OIIP](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: Media Play: "Mystery American" attends Sri Lankan intelligence meetings?

1. On Sunday, 7/14, readers of the SUNDAY TIMES (independent English weekender), one of Sri Lanka's mass circulation newspapers, woke up to front-page, above-the-fold headlines: "Mystery American at government intelligence meetings." The gist of the allegation: an AmCit had participated in meetings of the GSL's intelligence community. "This ... poses threats to their own sources of intelligence," a "highly agitated source" said, and "raises very serious questions over national security..." The story played throughout the week and into the following weekend. By 7/20 the AmCit had become a CIA agent named Bruce Hoffman, and had been joined by one or more colleagues from India and the UK. President Kumaratunga, furious at the discovery, had instructed senior officials to close intelligence meetings to foreigners. Senior officials, in turn, had admitted the presence of the AmCit but had insisted that his presence was important to the "restructuring of the intelligence unit." Kumaratunga's Peoples Alliance (PA) maintained that his presence was evidence of "increasing interference" by the USG as well as a "threat to the security of the President and our neighbor India." Finally, weekend reports had the PM's United National Party (UNP) declaring it "normal practice to obtain the services of foreign experts," but saying that the Prime Minister would send the foreigners home "if local intelligence officers think that foreign expertise is unnecessary." Meanwhile, other headlines had the foreigners leaving on their own volition, saying that they would "refuse to get involved in further activities," while at least one Sinhala daily reported that the visit had fallen prey to an LTTE plot to curtail the consultations.

2. Comment. As often happens in Sri Lankan politics, the "mysterious American" quickly became a cohabitation football, with the President's PA alliance "strongly oppos[ing] the presence of outsiders at such important meetings" and the PM's UNP insisting that "training of intelligence personnel by foreign experts has been carried out for a long time, even during the time of the PA government." He also became fodder for Sri Lanka's pro-LTTE interests, most vehemently in the pro-LTTE Tamil daily, SUDAR OLI, which called him "clear proof that Premier Ranil's government is being caught in the American net, little by little" and argued that the government, while engaged in peace talks for a permanent solution, is preparing to suppress the liberation war of the Tamils militarily by strengthening its forces. End comment.

3. Headlines.

- 7/13: SUNDAY TIMES (independent English weekender), "Mystery American at govt. intelligence meetings."

- 7/14: THINAKKURAL (independent Tamil daily), "American officer attending high-level meetings of intelligence officers"

- 7/17: ISLAND (independent English daily), "CBK says 'no' to foreigners at intelligence meetings"

- 7/18: THINAKKURAL, "President advises not to allow foreigners in intelligence unit meetings"

- 7/19: THINAKKURAL, "PA accuses U.S. ... of increasing interference"

7/20: SUNDAY LANKADEEPA (independent Sinhala weekender), "Intelligence re-structure: advisors from three countries quit"

- 7/20: SUNDAY TIMES, "Foreigners in or out: PM asks Lankan int. chiefs"

- 7/20: SUNDAY THINAKKURAL (independent Tamil weekender), "Accusation of PA rejected"

- 7/20: SUNDAY VIRAKESARI (independent Tamil weekender), "Foreign countries came forward to help our intelligence"

units ... quit"

- 7/22: LANKADEEPA (independent Sinhala daily),
"Intelligence restructuring: LTTE was instrumental in
getting rid of the advisors -- says Defence Secretary"

[14](#). Commentary.

[15](#). On 7/18, under the headline "American invasion of
intelligence services," the pro-LTTE SUDAR OLI (independent
Tamil daily) called the alleged incident "clear proof" of
U.S. meddling and the insincerity of the GSL as a peace
partner:

"This is a clear proof that Premier Ranil's government is
being caught in the American net, little by little.

"The Government, while engaged in peace talks for a
permanent solution, is preparing to suppress the liberation
war of the Tamils militarily by strengthening its forces.

"As a step in the implementation of this plan, the
government is seeking the fullest support of the U.S.

"Bringing American officers into the intelligence services
is a part of the government's plan to obtain U.S. support
for joint military exercises, sea operations, and weaponry.

"This attempt of the government to pawn the country to a
superpower will lead to further complications, from which
the country will not be able to escape.

"National forces should rise against such government
actions. Will these forces wake up?"

[16](#). On 7/20 the SUNDAY ISLAND (independent English
weekender), whose ruling editorial assumption is that the
GSL is being hoodwinked by the LTTE, said under the
headlines "spectres of indifference," that it found
"utterly incomprehensible the inability or unwillingness of
... officials to protest an act which violates the
constitution of Sri Lanka and endangers her national
security. The total silence of the Minister of Defence ...
is hardly surprising since he has proven beyond reasonable
doubt that his job is not to defend the national interests
of the state of Sri Lanka. However what about the
President, the SLFP and those patriots par excellence, the
JVP? How come they are yet to say a word about this
incident?"

[17](#). In contrast, the SUNDAY OBSERVER (government-owned
English weekender) took a more sardonic tone. In its
regular "Periscope" column it wondered: "Where else can an
aspiring 007 learn his ropes than at the feet of our
masters! What a privilege he had accorded to our
intelligence gurus. We should have more disciples like
this to strengthen our team. Viva! big brothers and 'big'
sisters." However, "Periscope" also made mention of "U.S.
intelligence success at disrupting the [LTTE's] Cambodian
operation" of arms smuggling, which, "Periscope" said, was
"another 'thorn' in the side [which] further reduces the
efficacy of their 'weapons transfer system.'"

ENTWISTLE